

DAVID LAWRENCE

New Warning on A-War Dangers

Out of London comes a piece of news that reminds the world of its greatest danger—the possibility of a nuclear war that could destroy tens of millions of lives.

The American people and other peoples have heretofore been led to believe that progress was being made toward some sort of international agreement which would ban the use of nuclear weapons. But as knowledgeable a public official as the defense secretary of Britain, Denis Healey, now says frankly that he fully expects, if war breaks out in Europe, to see Russia using nuclear weapons "from the word go."

This means, said the British secretary, that ground armies by themselves are no longer decisive and that the forces of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization would be compelled to use nuclear weapons "within days of an attack."

This explains why the government of Britain sees no need of maintaining a large army on the European continent. The United States government is being urged to adopt the same attitude. It may be that General de Gaulle foresaw this possibility when he demanded that NATO troops be taken out of France altogether, as the French now possess nuclear weapons. The pressure for a reduction of the military forces of the West in continental Europe is coming currently from both France and Britain, which have nuclear strength. The West Germans are worried because they have not been permitted

to develop a nuclear defense system.

Healey told the House of Commons that, since both East and West possess nuclear weapons, a long war in Europe would be difficult to imagine. He said:

"NATO would be forced to resort to nuclear weapons within days of an attack, and organized warfare would be impossible within days of starting to use nuclear weapons. Everything we know of Soviet military doctrine shows that if war did break out in Europe, Russia herself would use nuclear weapons from the word go."

It has been assumed hitherto that no government would initiate a nuclear war. But even in the United States some military men have declared that, as between complete defeat and the possible employment of nuclear power to prevent the enemy from achieving a victory, the choice must be made finally to use nuclear weapons.

The Russians recently have been revealed as possessing what is known as an "anti-missile missile defense." This means that the deterrent power which the United States for a long time has been counting on to prevent attack now may have been considerably weakened. If the Russians can intercept American missiles with missiles of their own, and the United States doesn't have a similar defense, America could suffer the loss of tens of millions of its citizens in a matter of hours. A superiority in the nuclear field could mean an

unparalleled power of blackmail.

The Russians say in rebuttal that they have not perfected their defense system and that it is only in its initial stages. American military men are insisting nevertheless that no chances be taken and that the United States build a similar anti-missile missile-defense system.

On top of the fears that the oligarchy in Moscow might grow reckless and trigger a nuclear war, there is also the disturbing fact that the Red Chinese already have developed nuclear weapons. They are expected within the next decade to extend their nuclear power by building medium-range and long-range ballistic missiles which could be a threat to the Soviet Union as well as the United States.

World opinion is, of course, solidly against the use of nuclear weapons. Unfortunately, however, no way has been devised to prevail upon the tightly controlled Communist regime in the Soviet Union to agree to a disarmament pact. The Russians have consistently refused to permit any form of international inspection so that even the signing of a treaty would not necessarily remove the danger of a nuclear war.

Until the Russian people somehow are made aware of the catastrophe that may lie ahead, mutual trust will not be established and an effective system of international control will not be imposed. Hence, the threat of a nuclear war will continue to alarm people everywhere.

© 1967